

NOTES AND NEWS

THE VALUE OF AFRICAN CULTURE

The following is a free translation of the first part of a letter published in the December 1958 issue of "La Voix du Congolais" and quoted in "Bantu", July 1959.

'Concerning the Civilisation to be adopted for our Country, the thing which I have most at heart and for which I ask your best attention, is that you should not depersonalize yourselves. Our Congolese society contains within itself irreplaceable values; do not let us destroy them by our own fault and do not let them be destroyed by anyone else whoever they may be.

The black people have their philosophy, their customs, their conceptions, their code for proper living. We ought to guard our Bantu basis, our moral values as the Europeans jealously guard theirs.

We are, like all the other inhabitants of this earth, men endowed with faults and good qualities. Nevertheless, each people acquires or develops, under the influence of historical, geographical, climatological or other factors, certain attitudes and certain cultural, social and mental accompaniments specifically belonging to their race. It is evident that the Blacks are no exception to this rule.

Our ancestors have left us a legacy of precious traditions which run the risk of being lost if we do not look after them properly. Certainly one should not try merely to retain them in their archaic form; but neither do we wish to replace them in a servile manner by European civilisation. What we would prefer is the improvement of our own culture with the aid of the civilisation which the Europeans have brought to us.

This ought to be done in the following order: take from Western civilisation what is good and beautiful, preserve from our own civilisation what is good and beautiful. From this amalgamation of European and African civilisations we will create a new civilisation suitable to modern Africa.

Confronted by certain sociological phenomena, we cannot conceive the future of the Congo otherwise than as the transformation of the typical African culture of the past into a new African culture inspired by the ancient principles and preserving the special genius of the African peoples.'

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INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL

The I.F.M.C. will be holding its Thirteenth Annual Conference in Vienna from the 24th to the 29th July, 1960. The main subject for discussion will be "The preservation of Authentic Folk Music by means of recording, with special reference to the activities of Radio Organisations". The Council feels that "Owing to the rapid disappearance of folk music traditions in practically all countries of the world . . . concerted action should be taken to preserve these by means of recording. It is, therefore, proposed that there should be an interchange of views between representatives of radio organisations, folk music institutions and others, as to methods of collection and preservation, possibilities of co-operation, etc."

Members of the African Music Society are heartily invited to attend, as this subject will be of especial importance to Africa. The Hon. Secretary would also be very glad to hear the views of A.M.S. members on the subject at any time, whether or not they are able to attend the Conference.

I.F.M.C. Secretary: Miss Maud Karpeles, 35 Princess Court, Queensway, London, W.2.

(See the broadcast "The Lost Valley", on page 44).

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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN MUSIC

Darius L. Thieme, of the Music Division, Library of Congress, is at present working on a bibliography of periodical articles on African Music. Address: 3786 First St., S.E., Washington 20, D.C., U.S.A.

(See record reviews)

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Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kauffman, missionaries under the Methodist Board of Missions, are going out to serve in Umtali, Southern Rhodesia, working in the area of development of church music with a special emphasis on indigenous music. Mr. Kauffman has done work in indigenous Indian church music over the last few years.

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AFRICAN MUSIC IN AMERICA

The American Society of African Culture, a newly formed private organization, is considering plans for an international festival of African music and dance to be held in America in 1960. It will also launch a nation-wide series of seminars on African culture as soon as possible.

(From The Nyasaland Times, 24-6-58)

We were interested to learn that the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation (Overseas), Limited, has assisted the Bantu Choir Leader, Mr. Moses Sephula, to go to the United States of America, where he is now taking up a bursary at Westminster College, Princeton.

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EGYPTIAN FOLK MUSIC

Hans Hickmann and Charles Gregoire Duc de Mecklembourg have just produced a catalogue of recordings of Egyptian folk music, preceded by a preliminary report on the traces of pharaonic music in the songs of the Nile Valley. It is published by Verlag Heitz GMBH, Baden-Baden, Postfach 4, Western Germany, and in addition to 116 plates and figures, is accompanied by 13 recorded examples on disc.

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We were interested to hear that, with the cooperation of the Uganda Museum, Kampala, weekend courses in African music have been held in Fort Portal and Mbarara, arranged by the extra-mural department of Makerere College. The speakers included Mr. Charles Taylor, of Bishop Stuart College, Mbarara, Mr. Solomon Mbabi-Katana, of Nyakasura School, Fort Portal, Mr. Musangizi and Mr. Kirindi.

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A.M.S. EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS.

The 'Spirit of Africa', the A.M.S. Exhibition of Paintings by groups of Central African artists, has been shown in several more centres in the Union during the year, under the auspices of the S.A. Association of Arts, and was most recently shown in Durban, as one of the most colourful, striking and interesting to have been seen there. It speaks highly for the groups of painters represented that their work has continued to arouse enthusiasm among so many different communities.

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The Hon. Secretary of the A.M.S., Mr. Hugh Tracey, has been asked to visit the United States towards the end of 1960 at the invitation of the American Government in order to present lectures on various aspects of African music to the eleven or more Universities which have an African Studies Department. These include Northwestern and Roosevelt in Chicago; Boston University in Massachusetts; Yale University and Hartford Seminary in Connecticut; John Hopkins and Howard Universities in Washington, the latter being the famous Negro University; Columbia in New York; Duquesne University in Pennsylvania; Duke University in North Carolina; and both the University of California and Stanford in Los Angeles, California.

If preparations are completed and confirmed in time Mr. Tracey expects to start his tour in October and return to Africa in January. He hopes to be able to spend some time also at the Library of Congress, Music Division, while in Washington.

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ERRATA

1. Journal Vol. II, No. I. Page 33;

"No more than an approximation to the sounds produced"
should read

"But the notes shown below are certainly more than an approximation to the sounds produced . . ."

2. Short article "Music Festivals in Africa" was contributed by Mr. Graham Hyslop, Kenya's Colony Music and Drama Officer.